

**Illinois Early Learning Council
Space Capacity Committee**

Friday, September 16th, 2011
10:00 am – 12:00 pm
33 W. Monroe, Suite 2400 - Chicago

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Bernard Cesarone (phone), Kim Collins, Ireta Gasner, Holly Knicker (phone), Mark McHugh (co-chair), Tony Raden, Olivia Roanhorse (staffer), Bonnie Roelle, Samir Tanna, Dawn Thomas (phone), Martin Torres (co-chair)

Absent: Cindy Bardeleben, Jose Cerda, Rebecca Deang, Craig Duetsch, Laura Frichtl, Mario Garcia, Refugio Gonzalez, Mary Griffith, Nakisha Hobbs, Dave Lowitzki, Kelly Magnuson, Giacomo Mancuso, Carol Morris, Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Sessy Nyman, Tracey Occomy, Sylvia Puente, Cathy Reed, Gregory Will, Cindy Zumwalt.

Introductions & Overview

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 am. Martin Torres welcomed committee members and members introduced themselves. Martin and Mark McHugh as the new committee co-chairs thanked Tony Raden on behalf of the committee for all his work in leading the committee's nationally recognized early childhood facility efforts. Tony explained that he will continue to provide guidance and support as needed for the next few months. Martin and Mark briefly introduced themselves and provided a brief background of their organizations. The committee reviewed and approved the May 26th meeting minutes with no edits or changes.

Early Childhood Construction Grant (ECCG) Program Update

A. Recommendations to CDB/ISBE regarding the prioritization of the underserved communities

- The committee reviewed the recommendation to the CDB and ISBE regarding data prioritization of underserved communities. The CDB and ISBE agreed to all of the committee's recommendations and plans to post the IECAM data methodology link to their website once it is finalized. The committee will be notified when the link has been posted.

B. ARRA Early Childhood Care and Education Grant Funding

- Kim Collins from the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development provided an update on the ARRA Early Childhood Care and Education Grant for facilities outreach and technical awareness. Kim explained that the RFA to identify a lead entity for this grant was currently in the IDHS procurement department and was making its way through the final approval stage. The Governor's Office has made this a top priority in their office and hopes to get this out soon.
- **Next Step:** Once the lead entity is identified, co-chairs want to follow up with the committee on timing of public awareness needs/efforts for the second round of the ECCG program funding.

C. IFF Webinar and ECCG FAQ Document

- IFF has agreed to partner with the committee, CDB and the Governor's Office of ECD to host a free 90 minute webinar to applicants interested in applying for the ECCG Program. The date and time will be finalized by the end of the day and information will be sent to the committee. The committee will work with the above noted entities to publicly disseminate information about the webinar soon after. For one week following the webinar, IFF has agreed to answer questions from webinar attendees.
- A small workgroup of the committee is working with the CDB to finalize a frequently asked question document on the ECCG Program. The document will be posted on the Governor's Office of ECD as well as the CDB website once it is finalized.

D. Discussion of CPS Set-Aside

- The committee discussed the CPS funding set-aside (20% or 9 million) to administer the grant. Based on an initial meeting with CDB, ISBE and CPS this past summer, by statute CPS must submit their application to CDB to receive their allotted funds.
- CPS expressed their concerns with being able to administer the grant as all grant funding must be used for capital costs. Given the lack of funding for administration, a promising recommendation that came out of the Mayor's Early Childhood Task Force was shared with the committee. The school districts would get 50% of the funding and the rest would go to community based organizations. CPS would work with the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) to jointly administer the grant program to Community Based Organizations (CBOs). The details of how DFSS would legally be able to administer this portion of the grant were not quite clear and would need to be further researched.
- The Mayor's ECTF also recommended the possibility of the City of Chicago leveraging additional private funding to support a larger capital initiative.
- Given the lack of a clear process and timeline for the Chicago set aside funds, the committee was interested in learning more about the details related to the timeline and administration of the grant (i.e. application process, award timelines, etc.).
- **Next Steps:** Make a formal request in writing for the co-chairs to meet with key CPS stakeholders to discuss allocation of grant dollars (i.e. 50% to CBO's, 50% to schools), the process for funding allocation - application process (i.e. use similar RFA currently being used by CDB), overall timeframe for the administration of this grant and finally, the level of detail in CPS' application to CDB. Staffer to work with co-chairs to schedule this meeting.

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT: ELCG)

The state is currently working on submitting an application to the U.S. Department of Education for up to \$70 million in federal funding for Illinois. A core component of the application is to improve quality across early learning programs by requiring states to adopt and develop a common, Quality Rating and Improvement System. As part of this strategy, the state would like to integrate the ECCG Program into the larger QRS strategy. The committee discussed that this strategy would 1.) Fulfill the committee's initial recommendation that grant funding criteria include program quality as part of the overall criteria and; 2.) Set a national standard by prioritizing future early childhood capital dollars based on their program quality.

A. Discussion on how to integrate the ECCG Program?

The RTT ELCG proposal would focus on having all school-based, licensed child care centers and Head Start centers enrolled in the state's QRS, with the overall goal being to have more

providers using the QRS and as a result improve program quality for all early learning programs: from adequate to good and from good to great.

The committee discussed how program quality might be integrated into the weighted criteria for the next round of the ECCG Program.

- While the state is currently working on revising the existing QRS system as part of the RTT ELCG application, committee members wanted to make sure the revised system didn't inadvertently restrict early learning programs, particularly those in high-need areas who may not have the capacity to be a part of the QRS system, from applying for facilities funding. Members also acknowledged that there are high quality programs out there that might not be representative of the QRS levels and therefore, would score lower for facilities funding.
- The committee discussed the challenge in balancing the need for establishing early childhood programs in high need areas with the need to fund high quality programs. The committee agreed that the while the goal should be to balance both, the reality is that this isn't always the case.
- As part of the package of emergency rules the Early Learning Council was compiling for the RTT ELCG application and given the lack of clarity on how program quality will be defined in the QRS, the committee agreed to make broad language recommendations to the existing ECCG Program rules.
- **Next Step:** Share the committee's proposed rule changes with the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development.

Next Steps

At the next committee meeting, discuss role of the committee as it relates to the Early Learning Council upcoming strategic planning meeting and review committee membership list. Co-chairs closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their participation. The meeting concluded at 12:05 pm.